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ROTC A-ok on City Campuses

By PHILIP RECCHIA



Hofstra University ROTC cadets (from left) Rachael Rubens, Steven Treut and Thomas Benny prepare for helicopter flight from Nassau Coliseum to Fort Dix, N.J. - Rick Kopstein

October 14, 2001 -- The terrorist attacks on America have given the ROTC a new profile that could help the training corps boost recruits at Big Apple campuses - and break a 32-year standoff at Harvard University. Officials estimate about 550 students are currently active in Army, Navy and Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps programs at local colleges and universities. That represents about a 10 percent increase over last year's enrollment. More significantly, online requests for applications have doubled since the Sept. 11 terror attacks at schools such as Fordham University, according to the college's ROTC commander, Lt. Col. John Dooley. But the biggest breakthrough for the corps could occur at Harvard, where influential graduates have petitioned the Ivy League institution to reinstate ROTC on the

campus, after it was banished amid Vietnam War protests. Among the 900 alumni who signed the petition was former Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, who noted: "No one can deny military training is a vital part of today's life." Weinberger's sentiments have been echoed on several New York campuses. Army ROTC is offered at Fordham, Hofstra and St. John's; Air Force ROTC at Manhattan College; and Navy ROTC at SUNY Maritime. But the latest ROTC moves at Harvard are yet to create any waves at New York schools that no longer host the corps, including Columbia University, New York University and City College of New York. Columbia's campus, well-known for its radical activism during the '60s, has been "real quiet" on the ROTC issue, according to Michael Mirer, editor-in-chief of the university's student newspaper, the Daily Spectator. "There's been a pretty lively debate among students about the Mideast situation," said Mirer. "But, to my knowledge, [there's] no talk of reinstating the ROTC." CCNY spokesman Charles DeCicco said he had not heard of any proposals by faculty or students to return ROTC to the school. "The question hasn't even come up," he said. ROTC was established during World War I to ensure an ample representation of educated men in the military. There are an estimated 28,470 students currently enrolled in Army ROTC programs at 270 colleges and universities nationwide.

